

VZCZCXRO8222
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHJI #0385/01 2860750
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 130750Z OCT 09
FM AMCONSUL JEDDAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1558
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0038
RUEHGU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT 0292
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 8542
RUEHDH/AMCONSUL DHAHRAN 0135
RUCNDA/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0106
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000385

NOFORN
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/11/2029

TAGS: IR IZ KIRF KISL KU QFDP PGOV PHUM SA

SUBJECT: "SITUATION CATASTROPHIQUE MAIS NON SANS ESPOIR":
DEPARTING IRAQI CONSUL GENERAL DISCOURAGED BUT NOT HOPELESS
AS HE MOVES TO KUWAIT

REF: JEDDAH 0368

JEDDAH 00000385 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Consul General Martin R. Quinn for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) SUMMARY. During October 10 farewell dinner at CG's residence, Iraqi Consul General Dr. Ajwad Sheikh Taha Hamad (strictly protect) had more to say about his posting as Charge d'Affaires in Kuwait. Departing Jeddah and arriving in Kuwait on October 11, Hamad expressed displeasure at the level of his appointment in Kuwait and referred to the possibility of his running as a Parliamentary candidate in the upcoming Iraqi elections. Recalling his family's hardships during the Saddam Hussein era, he expressed sympathy with Kurdish aspirations and longing for a secular Iraqi leader, such as Ayad Allawi, with the ability to keep damaging Iranian influence in Iraq firmly in check. END SUMMARY.

AN APPOINTMENT FOR WHICH HE IS QUALIFIED

BUT WHICH FRUSTRATES HIS AMBITION

¶2. (C/NF) He expounded at somewhat greater length than in our previous meeting (reftel) on his displeasure at being appointed Charge instead of Ambassador in Kuwait, but did note that in recent years all Iraqi COMs in Kuwait were at the Charge level. Nevertheless, he remains convinced that MFA Shia bureaucrats moved against him to downgrade his appointment because he is a Sunni. Hamad said that he had personally informed Iraqi FM Zebari that he could only guarantee that he would remain in Kuwait for a month "to see how things went," lamenting that he could be far "more effective" and do more for Iraq, with better access as ambassador. Since Kuwaitis in common with other Gulf Arabs are highly conscious of rank and status, he felt handicapped from the get-go.

¶3. (C/NF) Aside from the sectarian issue, Dr. Hamad speculated that one reason Zebari himself might not want to see him as an ambassador in Kuwait is that in 2005 he (Hamad) had been a Tawafuq candidate for Deputy Prime Minister and

thus might be perceived by Zebari as a politically ambitious underling who should be kept out of mainstream politics. Hamad admitted he had no specific evidence that Zebari wished to keep him down; it was "just a feeling." Hamad said he is toying with the idea of running again for Parliament in the upcoming Iraqi elections and had told Zebari he would be happy to serve back at the Ministry in Baghdad, but the FM insisted, "in his very pleasant manner," that Hamad was "needed in Kuwait." Hamad's second wife is Kuwaiti, and three of his children were born there.

SADDAM THE PSYCHOPATH

¶4. (C/NF) During the Saddam era Hamad spent several years as the Iraqi technical expert for OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries), headquartered in Kuwait. Claiming to be well plugged-in with the Kuwaiti power structure at his next post, he anticipated that Iraq's relations with Kuwait, especially the border dispute and oil field issues, would be especially tough. He recounted at length his version of the background for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, especially Saddam's pique at the Kuwaitis' crassly "mercantile attitude" about their support for Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war of the 1980s -- emphasizing that none of this justified the invasion. Saddam, he said, was "a psychopathic sadist" who hardly needed any excuse to react with brutal force. Hamad recalled that at one time Saddam wanted to appoint him Minister of Petroleum, but he confessed he was afraid to accept the position because of the dictator's penchant for elevating officials only to have the greater pleasure of bringing them down with violence: "Saddam took less delight in eliminating nobodies." Later

JEDDAH 00000385 002.2 OF 002

Hamad's family, including his mother, were arrested in an effort to pressure him to return to Iraq from his Jordanian exile; they were released after he was eventually granted residency in Canada. Hamad recalled that at one stage he had to admit the fact that he could do nothing for his family and to accept the possibility they might already be dead -- and thus act to save himself.

DISPLACED IRAQIS

¶5. (C/NF) A French-educated economist, Hamad spoke briefly of the dismal state of the Iraqi economy, citing figures of "50% unemployment" and the lack of foreign investment, especially from Gulf countries. Most manufacturing, he claimed, remain shut down with factory owners living in exile. In common with many Iraqis with the financial means, Hamad sends money on a monthly basis to displaced members of his family in Jordan and in Syria. The better-educated, more affluent Iraqis, engineers, doctors, industrialists and businessmen, sought refuge in Jordan, where King Abdullah recently allowed Iraqis to send their children to Jordanian public schools. Formerly, he said, the Iraqi expatriates were restricted to fee-paying private schools in Amman, which for many, deprived of regular income, had created enormous hardship. In Syria, on the other hand, life is much cheaper, and Iraqi families from the less privileged echelons of society manage to eke out an existence on as little as \$400 a month. Hamad estimated the total numbers of displaced Iraqis in Jordan at half a million and in Syria 700,000.

KURDISH AUTONOMY

¶6. (C/NF) Hamad spent time in the Kurdistan area before leaving Iraq and indicated that, as a civilized person with a sense of history, he fully sympathized with the Kurds' aspiration for nationhood, and had no problem with a Kurdish

President of Iraq (Talabani) as long as the Kurd was himself consciously an Iraqi nationalist. He commented that Kurds in Iraq had never been discriminated against to the extent that he discovered on visiting Turkey, where "in the 1980s Turkish Kurds were afraid even to speak their language." Nothing like that, he said, ever existed in Iraq. Nonetheless, when he visited Kurdistan from Jordan, Hamad said that he had been issued an iqama (residence permit for a non-national). The only problem now is that the Kurds could become greedy concerning the oil and unwilling to relinquish the autonomy enjoyed since the no-fly zone was imposed. Hamad believes the Kurds are better off remaining part of Iraq since otherwise they would be "surrounded on every side by enemies: Turkey, Iran, Syria, and southern Iraq."

ALLAWI AS ANSWER TO IRAN

¶7. COMMENT. (C/NF) Vehement concerning the negative Iranian influence in Iraq, the need to curb sectarian bias, and the urgency of installing Iraqi leaders (including Shia) who are strong enough to keep Iran in its place, Hamad spoke approvingly of former interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's leadership prospects as a secular Shiite and candidate in the coming elections. As for the fate of Iraq itself, he summed it up in French: "situation catastrophique mais non sans espoir" (situation catastrophic but not without hope.) END COMMENT.

QUINN